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ABSTRACT

The City University of New York (CUNY) instituted an open admissions policy in 1970 which provides all New York City high school graduates with an opportunity to attend college. Given the wide academic range of students now attending CUNY, compensatory models are being developed and evaluated in order to effectively deal with skill deficiencies. Baruch College, CUNY, has developed a compensatory program, Communications Skills (CS), especially for the unprepared student. Initial placement tests determine which courses a student is allowed to take. Those scoring in the bottom third are assigned to two semesters of CS, which uses a holistic approach to building college language facility. A team of reading, speaking, and writing faculty meets with approximately 15-20 students for nine hours weekly. The academic history of two groups of entering CS students was followed to determine the effectiveness of the program. An analysis of the retention rate and of the academic averages of the two groups strongly supports the efficacy of the program. About one third of the CS students have registered for a fifth semester at college, a figure which compares favorably with non-CS students. (RLV)

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# AN INTERDISCIPLINERY APPROACH TO COLLEGE COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

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AN INTERDISCIPLINERY APPROACH TO COLLEGE COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

The City University of New York instituted an Open Admissions policy in 1970. Basically, Open Admissions provides all New York City high school graduates with an opportunity to attend college. Attendant with Open Admissions is a range of skill deficiencies which require compensatory instructional programs. Contemporary colleges, with the exception of financially poor black colleges, have been reluctant to provide programs for special students. Historically, institutions like CUNY have prepared curriculum for high school graduates who were in the top third of the class. Now that virtually everyone can and is going to college, compensatory models are being developed and evaluated.

This paper will briefly describe a compensatory program, Communication Skills, developed at Bernard Baruch College, CUNY, especially for the underprepared student. All students who are accepted at Baruch College must take a battery of placement tests to determine mathematics, reading and writing proficiency. The writing test is not standardized, but requires each student to give a writing sample, which is evaluated by two English department faculty members. The students are permitted to select courses commensurate with their placement test scores. Those students who test at the top third of the class begin with regular college

courses. The middle group take corrective math, English, and attend reading study labs. The final group, which manifests the greatest handicaps in reading and writing, are assigned to Communication Skills. Inferior elementary or secondary schooling, foreign language interference, physical handicaps such as poor vision, poor teeth or nuerological defects all contribute to the Communication Skills students' problems. Success for the freshmen in Communication Skills depends mainly upon the severity of the learning problem. Communication Skills is designed to use a holistic approach to building college language facility. Faculty from Compensatory Programs (reading), Speech (speaking), and English (writing) comprise each team. Teams hold class for a total of nine hours weekly with approximately 15 to 20 students. (Three class hours are allotted per component.) Team faculty meet regularly to plan cooperative lesson themes and discuss the progress of students.

Students earn seven credits upon successful completion of two semesters of Communication Skills and receive a grade of "Pass". Although this is intended to be a two semester course provisions have been made for students to receive credit after one semester and be exempt from a second semester. Upon completion of Communication Skills a student must immediatley register for the required terminal regular English course. Progress of Communication Skills students in regular English is a key criterion for program evaluation.

TEACH TEACHING

In the Communication Skills program the term team teaching refers to the joint responsibility of reading, speech, and English faculty for the development and course instruction. In addition, there is a counselor assigned to each section of Communication Skills. The counselor's role is primarily one of a student advocate. The team meets with the counselor periodically to discuss particular students and their learning disabilities. In cases where students have made extremely limited progress the counselor, a team representative, and the director of Instructional Services conduct an exit counseling session with the student. The exit counseling usually comes shortly after the middle of the second semester. At the exit counseling conference the student is faced with the reality of his achievement thus far and is helped to explore other alternatives. The department's philosophy is that students who are unable to successfully handle college assignments must have some other strengths that can be utilized.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

An evaluation of the Communication Skills program involves a look at the total student and how he or she is able to survive in the college at large. Alan Robinson's statement about reading evaluation further clarifies our task. Robinson states:

> "Evaluation of a reading program that permeates the curriculum is complex. Perhaps the best

> test is an investigation of student achievement through an examination of the results of both standardized and informal tests, teachers' evaluations of students' progress, and grades in the content areas. Although improved achievement on reading tests may give some indication of the value of the program, in the long run progress must be measured by improved achievement in all content areas. If students do not show forward movement on formal and informal evaluations of their ability to cope with the materials of the various content areas, the reading program must be carefully reexamined."[1]

Since Communication Skills is more than a reading program the students' progress is recorded in many ways. The team faculty meet regularly and decide the order that they will work on specific speaking, reading and writing skills. Students meet weekly with each team member to discuss written and oral assignments. At mid semester, students receive a written progress report from each team faculty person. The students have an opportunity to evaluate their progress at this time on the same report form. At the end of each semester a culminating project is due for each component. Frequently, the project is one with several parts to represent acquisition of the skills developed for speech, reading and writing. Since the purpose of Communication Skills is to provide the students with the skills necessary, the purpose of this report is to look at two Communication Skills groups; a pilot group and a regular group who have at this writing completed a minimum of four semesters of college.

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[1]Robinson, Alan H., "New Patterns In the Secondary School" in Administrators and Reading, edited by Thorsten R. Carlsen, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. 1972, p. 260.

## ANALYSIS OF DATA

In the study of Communication Skills, an analysis has been made of the first two groups of students who entered the program in Spring 1973 (the pilot group) and Fall 1973. These two groups have been studied for five and four complete semesters respectively. For the purpose of this analysis the sample groups are defined as:

Cohort I : C.C.S. students entering Baruch-Spring 1973

Cohort II : C.C.S. students entering Baruch-Fall 1973

The research design has been set up to evaluate the academic worth of Communication Skills by assessing the progress of the CCS students upon entry into regular college level English and other courses necessary to satisfy the requirements for a college degree. Since we are interested in the overall progress of the CCS students in college, their performance will be studied until the student graduates or leaves college by some type of attrition, i.e., leave of absence, transfer, withdrawal, debarrment, or exit counseling. The variables used to conduct this study are high school averages, grade point averages, credit and contact hour generation.

It should be noted that the mean high school averages of the two groups are 71.41 and 72.12, respectively. There is no significant difference between the mean high school averages of the two groups as tested at the .05 level of significance. This data

suggests that the students in Cohort I and II shared similar academic backgrounds.

The emphasis in this article is on the first three semesters because C.C.S. was established initially as a two semester course generating 7 credits upon completion. After completion of C.C.S. the student has developed the necessary basic skills to go immediately into regular college level English the following semester. The study shows that a very small percentage finish C.C.S. in one semester, the majority finish in 2 semesters and the remaining small portion take a third semester with special permission to complete C.C.S.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The definitions for the various abbreviations used in the tables and referred to throughout the article are listed below:

INC - incomplete grade in C.C.S. (a student receives an INC in C.C.S. until the course is successfully completed at which time a grade of PASS is given)

WU - failure due to excessive absence from class

J,W - indicates that a student dropped the course without penalty

NE - indicates that a student is not enrolled in an English or C.C.S. course but is registered in school for that semester.

NR - indicates that a student is not registered in school for that semester.

REG ENG - means regular college level English

COHORT I - C.C.S. students who entered Baruch College in Spring 1973

COHORT II - C.C.S. students who entered Baruch College in Fall 1973

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COHORT I WITH COHORT II

The pilot group of Communication Skills students entered Baruch Spring 1973. This is referred to as Cohort I and is comprised of 68 students. Cohort II, which is the Fall 1973 entering C.C.S. group, has a total of 178 students. The grade distribution in Communication Skills is seen in the SEMESTER 1 performance of each group as displayed in tables 1 and 1A (page 10) for Cohort I and Cohort II, respectively.

As stated earlier, very few students complete Communication Skills in one semester since it is prescribed as a two semester interdisciplinary course. The figures from both tables I and IA atest to this fact in that only approximately 6.0% in both groups were able to complete the course in one semester. More than 83% in both groups received "Inc's" in SEMESTER 1 with a small portion of students dropping the course, 4.41% and 11.23% respectively. The most frequent reason appearing for a student who dropped C.C.S. in SEMESTER 1 was to go on a leave of absence.

Only two of the students in Cohort I who passed in SEMESTER 1, enrolled the very next semester in Regular college level English. These two students received a "J" and I85 (incomplete with 85% of work done) respectively. However, they both enrolled in REG ENG during later semesters (3rd and 4th semesters) and received grades of C and B, respectively. The remaining two students in Cohort I

who passed C.C.S. the first semester enrolled in regular English three (3) and four (4) semesters later, respectively. One student did not complete the English due to a transfer to another college and the latter student completed regular English with a grade of "A". This shows that in Cohort I three of the four students who passed C.C.S. in semester 1 were very successful in regular college level English.

COHORT I

| TABLE I | SEMESTER I | SPRING 1973 6/73 |
|---|---|---|
| Grade in CCS ID1 | # | % |
| INC | 61 | 89.71 |
| PASS | 4 | 5.88 |
| J | 3 | 4.41 |
| TOTAL | 68 | 100.00 |

COHORT II

| TABLE 1A | SEMESTER I | FALL 1973 (1/74) |
|---|---|---|
| Grade in CCS ID1 | # | % |
| INC | 148 | 83.14 |
| PASS | 10 | 5.61 |
| J | 20 | 11.23 |
| TOTAL | 178 | 100.00 |

A look at the students in Cohort II who passed C.C.S. in SEMESTER 1 shows that eight (8) of the ten students went on to successfully complete REG ENG. The remaining two students were debarred from school, one after an unsuccessful attempt at REG ENG. A larger percentage of Cohort II students passing C.C.S. in one semester, went on to take REG ENG the very next semester (80%). This indicates a trend toward no waiting period between completion of C.C.S. and enrolling in REG ENG which is in keeping with the original concept of the English sequence policy.

The next tables, 2 and 2A, (pages 12 and 13) show the enrollment figures in C.C.S. for semester 2 for each Cohort. Cohort II shows a higher retention rate of students enrolled in C.C.S. for the second semester, that is 82% as compared to 70.58% retention for Cohort I. This implies that the Fall 1973 Cohort has a lower attrition rate which can be verified by the lower percentage in the "NR" (not registered in college) category for Cohort II.

Special note should be given to the substantial increase in the passing rates for C.C.S. in both groups at the end of SEMESTER 2. Cohort I shows a passing rate of 33.82% and Cohort II has a passing rate of 37.10%. The survival rate of Cohort I indicates that eighteen or 78% of the 23 students who passed C.C.S. in SEMESTER 2 went on to enroll in regular English with sixteen or 88% of those attempting REG ENG successfully completing the course.

COHORT I

| TABLE 2 | SEMESTER 2 PERFORMANCE | TERM ENDING 1/74 |
|---|---|---|
| Grade in CCS ID2 | # | % |
| INC | 20 | 20.41 |
| PASS | 23 | 33.82 |
| J's | 4 | 5.88 |
| DEL (owe school fees) | 1 | 1.47 |
| Subtotal of original group who registered in CCS a 2nd time | 48 | 70.58 |
| Registered in REG ENG (WII or 9) | 2 | 2.94 |
| Registered in WI | 2 | 2.94 |
| NE | 3 | 4.41 |
| NR | 13 | 19.12 |
| Subtotal not enrolled in CCS Semester 2 | 20 | 29.41 |
| GRAND TOTAL | 68 | 100.00 |

COHORT II

| Table 2A | SEMESTER 2 | TERM ENDING 6/74 |
|---|---|---|
| Grade in CCS ID2 | # | % |
| INC | 62 | 34.83 |
| PASS | 66 | 37.10 |
| J | 18 | 10.11 |
| Subtotal registering for CCS a 2nd time | 146 | 82.04 |
| REG ENG | 7 | 3.93 |
| NE | 3 | 1.68 |
| NR | 22 | 12.35 |
| Subtotal not enrolled in CCS Semester 2 | 32 | 17.96 |
| GRAND TOTAL | 178 | 100.00 |

Of the remaining two students, one dropped regular English and one failed due to absence (WU). The other students either have not taken regular English to date or went on a leave of absence. One final student registered for a WI course which should not have happened since WI is not necessary after completing C.C.S. Table 2A shows that there were no students who registered improperly which shows a trend toward improvement in registration procedures for the C.C.S. students.

For Cohort II, the survival rate of the 66 students who passed C.C.S. at the end of SEMESTER 2 shows that 59 or 89.39% attempted regular English to date. Of these attempting regular English 48 or 81.36% passed, 9 or 15.25% failed and the remaining 2 either received INC or withdrew from the course.

At the end of SEMESTER 2, it can be seen that 27 or 39.7% of Cohort I and 76 or 42.7% of Cohort II had completed C.C.S. in at least two semesters. This suggests a trend toward a higher percentage of students completing C.C.S in at least two semesters.

SEMESTER 3, Tables 3 and 3A (pages 15 & 16) show that slightly over 20% of the entering students in each group took C.C.S. a third time. A look at the figures for the total entering groups indicates that 5 or 7.35% and 26 or 14.61% respectively, took three semesters to successfully complete C.C.S. An overview of the third semester students passing C.C.S. in Cohort I shows that two of the five students receiving P grades are still in school to date. One completed regular English with a B and the other is currently enrolled in regular English.

COHORT I

| TABLE 3 | SEMESTER 3 | TERM ENDING 6/74 |
|---|---|---|
| GRADE IN CCS ID2 (3rd Semester) | # | % |
| INC | 6 | 8.82 |
| PASS | 5 | 7.35 |
| J | 2 | 2.94 |
| DEL | 1 | 1.47 |
| Subtotal enrolled in CCS a 3rd time | 14 | 20.58 |
| REG ENG | 15 | 22.06 |
| NE | 14 | 20.59 |
| NR | 25 | 36.76 |
| Subtotal not enrolled in CCS Semester 3 | 54 | 79.41 |
| GRAND TOTAL | 68 | 100.00 |

COHORT II

| TABLE 3A | SEMESTER 3 | TERM ENDING 1/75 |
|---|---|---|
| GRADE IN CCS ID2 (3rd Semester) | # | % |
| INC | 9 | 5.05 |
| PASS | 26 | 14.61 |
| J,W | 4 | 2.24 |
| WU | 3 | 1.69 |
| Subtotal taking CCS a third time | 42 | 23.59 |
| 1.1 (corrective English) | 1 | 0.56 |
| REG ENG | 59 | 33.14 |
| NE | 12 | 6.74 |
| NR | 64 | 35.95 |
| Subtotal not enrolled in CCS Semester 3 | 136 | 76.39 |
| GRAND TOTAL | 178 | 100.00 |

The records for SEMESTER 3 show that nineteen* of the 26 (73%) in Cohort II are still retained in school to date. Of that nineteen, 13 (68.42%) completed regular English successfully. The remaining 13 of the original 26 were debarred or are taking regular English currently for the first or second time.

Most students who receive an INC in SEMESTER 3 of C.C.S. are debarred from school or exit counseled. The aim here is to exit counsel this type of student before he gets debarred so that he can leave school in more positive manner with additional insight regarding alternatives to traditional college programs.

It should be noted that the mode or highest frequency for grades received in C.C.S. for SEMESTER 2 of both Cohorts is in the "PASS" category. The percentage of passing grades for C.C.S. in SEMESTER 2 for Cohort I and II was tested at the .05 level of significance and was found to be significantly higher than the passing rates for C.C.S. in SEMESTER 1 and SEMESTER 3 for both groups. This is of great importance because the original policy guidelines stipulates that the time period for this course is two semesters.

Performance in Regular English

Tables 4 and 4A (pages 19 and 20) give an overview of the

*This figure includes some students who were debarred and have returned on C+ probation as of Fall 1975.

performance of C.C.S. students in regular college level English. An examination of these figures shows that of the C.C.S. students attempting regular college level English, 76.00% and 75.8% passed for Cohort I and II, respectively. These figures are comparable to the passing rates (75%) in REG ENG of the regular college students.* It should be further noted that the greatest distribution of the grades range between A and C for both Cohort I and II.

These are encouraging figures because the ultimate goal of the Communication Skills program is to provide the necessary basic skills to underprepared students to enable them to cope successfully with the required regular college level English and other curriculum necessary to satisfy the requirements for a college degree.

*Source - Baruch Institutional Research, Spring 1975.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE IN REG ENG FOR COHORT I

TABLE 4

| Grade in REG ENG | # | % |
|---|---|---|
| A | 1 | 4.00 |
| B | 2 | 8.00 |
| C | 12 | 48.00 |
| D | 4 | 16.00 |
| F | 1 | 4.00 |
| WU (failure due to absence) | 2 | 8.00 |
| W (withdrew without penalty | 3 | 12.00 |
| Total taking REG ENG through Spring 1975 | 25 | 100.00 |

| Overall Performance | | |
|---|---|---|
| Passing REG ENG | 19 | 76.00 |
| Failing REG ENG | 3 | 12.00 |
| W | 3 | 12.00 |
| | 25 | 100.00 |

NOTE: 15 Or 60% received grades ranging from A-C

PERFORMANCE IN REG ENG FOR COHORT II

TABLE 4A

| Grade in REG ENG | # | % |
|---|---|---|
| A | 3 | 3.30 |
| B | 17 | 18.68 |
| C | 33 | 36.26 |
| D | 15 | 16.48 |
| P | 1 | 1.10 |
| F | 12 | 13.19 |
| WU | 6 | 6.59 |
| W | 4 | 4.40 |
| Total taking REG ENG through Spring 1975 | 91 | 100.00 |

Overall Performance

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Passing REG ENG | 69 | 75.8 |
| Failing REG ENG | 18 | 19.8 |
| W | 4 | 4.4 |
| | 91 | 100.00 |

NOTE: 53 or 58% received grades ranging from A-C

RETENTION

The retention figures for Cohort I indicate that 16 or 23.53% of the original group were still enrolled in college as of Fall 1975. The overall G.P.A. for students retained in Cohort I is 2.33 with remediation included.[2] The G.P.A. for this group is 2.49 without remediation. This remaining group is maintaining satisfactory standards according to the college requirements. The retention figures are exceptionally significant because these students as a group according to traditional criteria for college entrance are considered unable to work at a college level. The mere designation as a Communication Skills student means high risk.

The retention figures for Cohort II show that 71 or 40% of the Fall 1973 entering C.C.S. students have registered for a 5th semester. The overall G.P.A. of this group is 1.96 and 1.97 with and without remediation respectively.

The Communication Skills students are making significant progress when we note that the graduation and retention figures of the original Fall 1970 Open Admissions class for Baruch show a graduation and retention rate of 37.6% over a period of eight semesters for students with high school averages between 70 and 74.

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[2] "Pass" grades for remedial courses are computed as a "C" for all students.

CONCLUSION

Baruch College has instituted an innovative systematiac approach to preparing the severely academically handicapped student for regular college work via the Communication Skills program. In two semesters a team consisting of speech, reading and writing faculty cooperatively develop college skills. An analysis of the retention and averages of the pilot group and a regular group of Communication Skills students strongly supports the program philosophy. This paper is the beginning of a series of reports and analysis of the primary C.C.S. groups until they have had the opportunity to complete eight semesters of work.